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FM AMEMBASSY SKOPJE
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 6947
INFO RUEHZL/EUROPEAN POLITICAL COLLECTIVE 0173
RUEAIIA/CIA WASHINGTON DC
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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 SKOPJE 000064

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E.O. 12958: DECL: 01/25/2018

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SUBJECT: MACEDONIA: READOUT OF JANUARY 21 NIMETZ TALKS ON
THE NAME ISSUE

REF: A. SKOPJE 48
[1](#)B. SKOPJE 21
[1](#)C. SKOPJE 32

Classified By: P/E CHIEF SHUBLER, REASONS 1.4 (B) & (D).

SUMMARY

[1](#)1. (C) The January 21 talks in Ohrid on the name issue between Skopje and Athens resulted in no new substantive developments, although UN Special Negotiator Nimetz characterized the discussions as positive (ref A). The Macedonian side offered a new list of CBMs as a goodwill gesture and is awaiting an official Greek response. Nimetz later told President Crvenkovski he had been asked by a high-level USG official to come up with a new proposal on the name to be presented to the two sides, either during their next bilateral in Athens in February, or shortly thereafter. Crvenkovski told Nimetz such a proposal would have to be based on Nimetz's October 2005 proposals, or a variant thereof. We continue to believe that the best, if not only, chance for resolving the name issue is to get both sides to agree, (possibly on the basis of agreement on a name formula as a basis for discussion and resolution) before the NATO summit in Bucharest in April, to resolve the name issue in the period between Macedonia receiving a membership invitation and Greek ratification of the invitation. End summary.

MACEDONIAN CBM PROPOSAL

[1](#)2. (SBU) The President's Chief of Staff, Natasa Savova, briefed P/E Chief January 22 on the meeting between the Macedonian and Greek name issue negotiators mediated by UN Special Negotiator Nimetz in Ohrid on January 21. Nimetz had briefed President Crvenkovski and Savova on the Ohrid talks the morning of January 22.

[1](#)3. (C) Savova said the GOM negotiator, Ambassador Nikola Dimitrov, had presented the Greek side with an expanded list of CBMs (ref A), which Greek negotiator Vassilakis had said "would be considered" by Athens. Vassilakis had warned, however, that the two sides needed to focus on resolving the name issue, and that CBMs could be discussed after that occurred. Apart from the discussion of the CBMs, there had been no substantive progress in the name talks, Savova added.

NAME SOLUTION BEFORE BUCHAREST?

14. (C) According to Savova, Nimetz told Crvenkovski that he recently had been asked by a high-level State Department official to prepare a new proposal on the name before the NATO Summit in Bucharest this April. The Macedonians expected the proposal would be unveiled at the next Greece-Macedonia meeting in Athens in February, or shortly thereafter. Savova said the Macedonian side was concerned that the GOM would come under pressure to resolve the name issue at the same time as it was being pressed to recognize an independent Kosovo. She suggested the political optics of such pressure would have a negative impact on public opinion here, and could further bolster the government's resistance to being forced into agreement on a name solution before the Bucharest Summit.

15. (C) Responding to Nimetz, the President had said that, if/if the Macedonian side were to receive a new proposal, it had to be based on Nimetz's October 2005 proposal (ref B), or a variant thereof. Savova said she suspected PM Gruevski would not/not share the President's position on this, which the two leaders had not yet discussed, since Gruevski had rejected any discussion of the 2005 proposal in cabinet meetings on the name. Crvenkovski had asked Nimetz to craft any new proposal so that the Macedonian side would not be forced to reject it, and said the GOM could not accept any proposal that would "detract from Macedonia's identity."

COMMENT

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16. (C) We continue to believe, as outlined in ref C, that the most realistic and viable path to a positive outcome for Macedonia's NATO bid, if Greece is intent on vetoing, is to get both Skopje and Athens to agree before the Bucharest summit that they will resolve the name issue after/after Macedonia receives a membership invitation, but before ratification of that invitation by Greece. If Nimetz does present a new proposal in February or March, its chances of success, though very slim, will be best -- from Skopje's perspective -- if it does not push the GOM to agree to a final name solution before April, which we are certain PM Gruevski would reject as political suicide.

MILOVANOVIC